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ABSTRACT

As part of a larger research effort to determine what constitutes an effective information system, a user evaluation of the "Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest", a monthly publication produced by the research and development section of the Social Service Department, was carried out. A stratified sample of 700 among the total 2,424 departmental employees received a questionnaire designed to obtain data on the use and usefulness of the "Digest". In addition, an interview survey was designed to acquire data on the Digest that could not easily be obtained by the questionnaire and data on the information requirements of the staff. The results indicated that the "Digest" was read by almost everyone in the department. Nearly all respondents (94 percent) read the news section and 79 percent found it useful. The library information bulletin was read by only half of the respondents and only just over a third of the respondents found it useful. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the present monthly frequency and also with the presentation. There was a general feeling among the interviewees that articles and letters giving personal views and comments ought to be published. Conclusions and recommendations relate to four main parts of the information system: the "Digest", the office filing systems, the information officers, and the role of the department's library. (CH)

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Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences

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November 1973

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PREFACE

This report describes the results of work carried out as part of the DISISS (Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences) research project, at the University of Bath. The objective of the project is to carry out research necessary for the effective design of information systems in the social sciences, whether by creation of new systems or the modification of existing ones. The project, which is funded by OSTI, commenced in 1971 and will run until the end of 1974.

This report is concerned with the evaluation of an existing information service for practitioners. The service studied was the Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest which is a monthly publication produced by the research and development section of the Social Services Department. It is distributed to approximately 2,500 employees of the Department.

Members of the DISISS team and the Social Services Department worked closely together on the study. Barbara Skelton conducted most of the work for the DISISS team; Robert Walker and Colin Forsyth organised the work for the Social Services Department. The report was drafted by Barbara Skelton; the draft report was read, and contributions made, by Michael Brittain, Maurice Line, Stephen Roberts, Peter Burridge, and representatives of the Social Services Department.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes a user evaluation of an information service - the Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest. An essential part of the DISISS[1] (Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences) research involves the study of user preferences in information system design. Two main approaches have been used: the setting up of an experimental information service, and the evaluation of existing information services. This report is concerned with one example of the latter.

However well an information service is designed, it is ineffective unless it is used; and very little is known of the actual use made of information tools and services, or, when used, of their value as assessed by the user. Moreover, much information research has been conducted in isolation from the development of actual services - the impact of such research on services is not easy to demonstrate. One way of attacking these problems is to evaluate actual services in the field, not merely by such measures as recall and precision, but by use, usability, and usefulness.

At the end of 1972 contact was made with the Wiltshire Social Services Department, which had recently started publishing a Staff Digest. It was agreed that the DISISS team should attempt to evaluate the Digest and that members of the research and development group of the Social Services Department would help organise the survey and carry out preliminary data analysis.

Evaluation of information services in any strict sense is not easy, even when numerical measures (for example, of retrieval and recall) are available. In this study such precise measures were not possible, nor indeed available, and instead an effort was made to develop valid methods, direct or indirect, of assessing the use of the Digest by the staff, and its impact on them. To this end, both questionnaire and interviews were used. The questionnaire sought data on the use of the Digest, while the interviews aimed to obtain supplementary data on the Digest, and in addition, data on some aspects of the information-seeking behaviour of the department's employees. This additional data was desirable in order to put the use of the Digest in a wider context, both of the behaviour of the employees and of the existing information resources of the department.

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[1] Carried out at the University of Bath 1971-1974 with the support of a grant from the Office for Scientific and Technical Information.

1.1 Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest

The Digest was first produced in March 1972. Its main aims were to serve as a channel of communication by means of which members of the staff could express their views and be kept informed of developments within the department. Good communication amongst members of the staff was thought essential for developing a sense of involvement in the wide range of social service provision offered by the department.

The Digest is issued monthly. It is divided into two main sections - a news section and the library information bulletin. The news section contains material on committee decisions and developments, coverage of departmental activities in the local press, departmental information, staff news, news from area offices, national news, features on particular aspects of the department's work, notices of courses, conferences, etc., articles by members of the staff and letters to the Editor. The library information bulletin, compiled by the staff of the County Library, consists of abstracts of recent journal articles and books that are relevant to social welfare. All items abstracted are available from the library.

The Digest is sent out to every member of the department. All staff apart from residential staff have the Digest delivered personally to them; in residential establishments copies of the Digest are placed in strategic places, such as the staff rooms, where the staff can help themselves to a copy.

The Wiltshire Social Services Department is divided into five administrative units: Salisbury, Chippenham, Devizes and Marlborough, Trowbridge, and Swindon. The headquarters are at County Hall, Trowbridge, and an area office is situated in each of the five administrative units. The residential establishments consist of training centres for the mentally handicapped, homes for the elderly, children's homes, children's reception homes, hostels, rehabilitation centres, and sheltered workshops.

1.2 Method of evaluation

As noted, two methods were used to evaluate the Digest - a questionnaire, and an interview survey. The questionnaire was designed to obtain data on the

use and usefulness of the Digest. The interview survey, which was semi-structured, was designed to acquire data to supplement that obtained from the questionnaire, data on the Digest that could not be easily obtained by questionnaire, and also data on the information requirements of the staff of the department. The questionnaire and the interview schedule are shown in Appendix A.

Pilot studies were carried out to test the questionnaire and the interview schedule. As a result of these, the questionnaire was redesigned. No changes were made to the interview schedule.

1.3 The samples

The department employs in total 2,424 persons, of whom 700 received the questionnaire; the sampling fraction was therefore 2:7. The employees were stratified into eight groups according to the type of work they did. The groups were as follows:

(a) Director - Director
Assistant director
Area directors

(b) Senior Staff - Co-ordinators
Team leaders
Wardens
Managers and Foremen
Officers-in-charge
Principal officers
Senior officers

(c) Professionally trained - Social workers
Occupational therapists
Teachers
Assistant officers-in-charge
Craft instructors
Deputy wardens
Assistant home-help organisers

(d) Administrative - Senior administrators
Administrative assistants

(e) Clerical - Clerical assistants
Welfare assistants
Caring staff
Night attendants
Child-care officers (residential)

(f) Manual staff - Gardeners
Handymen
Cleaners
Domestic assistants

(g) Home-helps

(h) Care assistants in residential establishments.

TABLE 1

THE SAMPLE

Staff groups	Total no. in department	Questionnaire sample	Interview sample
Director	10	3	4
Senior	102	31	23
Professionally trained	180	53	17
Administrative	14	4	2
Clerical	137	41	8
Manual	385	105	11
Home-helps	1,410	410	4
Care assistants	186	53	5
All groups	2,424	700	74

The interview sample was obtained by taking 2 in every 7 persons from each group. Residential staff were sampled separately from the rest of the staff in order to obtain an even spread of staff working in different types of residential establishments. A third of each type of residential establishment was identified, and from these staff were sampled at random from each of the six relevant staff groups (no directors or home-helps were employed in residential establishments). Table 1 indicates the number of persons from each staff group in the sample.

Seventy-four persons were interviewed. The number of persons interviewed in each staff group is shown in Table 1. A detailed breakdown of the interviewees is as follows:

Director - Director 1
Assistant director 1
Area director 2

Senior staff - Co-ordinators 2
Team leaders 3
Wardens 4
Managers and Foremen 2
Officers-in-charge 7
Principal and Senior officers 5

Professionally trained staff - Social workers 7
Occupational therapists 1
Assistant officers-in-charge 7
Craft instructor 1
Assistant home-help organiser 1

Administrative - Administrative assistants 2

Clerical - Clerical assistants 5
Welfare assistants 3

Manual - Gardeners 2
Handymen 2
Domestic assistants 6
Cook 1

Home-helps 4

Care assistants 5

The sample of interviewees was selected at random mainly from persons who had completed a questionnaire. A few persons who had not received a questionnaire were included in the interview sample; this was because the interviews had to be carried out with a minimum amount of travelling between area offices. Relatively more senior and professionally trained staff were interviewed than other types of staff because it was thought that senior and professionally trained staff had more diverse information requirements than other groups.

In addition to the 74 individual interviews, 6 more social workers were interviewed as a group. Previous research (INFROSS) carried out at Bath University[1] had studied the information requirements of social workers; further data on this was of particular interest to the present research. As only 7 social workers were included in the main interview sample, 6 additional social workers were interviewed. These were all selected from one area office in order to keep the amount of travelling to a minimum. All six were interviewed together in one group; the same interview schedule was used as for the rest of the interviews, but because it was a group interview it was not adhered to so strictly as in the other interviews. The data obtained from the group interview was analysed separately from the main interview data and is reported separately where relevant.

1.4 Conduct of the questionnaire survey

The questionnaires were distributed to the sample by selected persons in each area office. These were usually administrative assistants in area offices, and officers-in-charge in residential establishments. These persons were asked to distribute a given number of questionnaires to persons in given staff groups. They were also asked to be responsible for collecting the completed questionnaires from each of the persons to whom they had given one. This distribution method was used for all the sample except the home-helps; the questionnaires were sent by post to each of these persons in the sample, because their visits to area offices were infrequent, and they were asked to return the questionnaire with their job sheets to the area office.

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[1] BATH UNIVERSITY. Investigation into information requirements of the social sciences: the information needs of social workers. (Report No. 4) Bath, University Library, 1971.

1.5 Conduct of the interview survey

All the interviews were carried out by one member of the DISISS team. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, and was held in the office of the interviewee. The Social Services Department arranged the interview schedule. Most of the interviewees were asked directly by the person organising the schedule if they were willing to be interviewed. Care assistants and manual staff were asked to co-operate by the officer- or assistant officer-in-charge of residential establishments, and social workers were asked to co-operate via team leaders. The reason these categories of staff were not asked directly by the person organising the interview schedule if they were willing to be interviewed, was because they worked variable hours, and in some cases it was difficult to plan the interviews a week beforehand on specific days and at specific times. It was particularly difficult to arrange interviews with social workers as they were likely to be called out of the office at any time. In the main the social workers who were interviewed were those who were available at the time the interviewer was in the area office. Very few persons refused to be interviewed.

The interviews were spread over a two-week period and were arranged in such a way as to minimise the travelling time between area offices. The interviewees were from all 5 areas and from 18 residential establishments.

1.6 Questionnaire response rate

The overall response rate was 48 per cent. Table 2 shows the response rate per staff group: home-helps, manual, clerical and administrative staff gave a lower response than other staff groups. The particularly low response from home-helps may have been due to the fact that they were asked to return the questionnaires to the area office rather than by handing them in to a key person with whom they had daily contact.

1.7 Division of work

The Social Services Department was responsible for providing the sample for the questionnaire and interview surveys, distributing the questionnaires,

collecting the completed questionnaires, making contact with persons to be interviewed and arranging the timetable for the interviews, and finally for the preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data. The latter involved the coding of the questionnaires and the presentation of results in the form of percentages.

The DISISS team had responsibility for designing the questionnaire and interview surveys, conducting the interviews, analysing the questionnaire and interview data and presenting the results in report form.

TABLE 2

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

Staff groups	N	%
Directors	2	67
Senior	24	78
Professionally trained	47	88
Administrative	6	43
Clerical	24	59
Manual	56	53
Home-helps	141	34
Care assistants	44	83
All groups	344	48

2.0 DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 Methods of analysis

The questionnaire data was analysed by hand. All the data from the questionnaires was recorded on master sheets to facilitate data analysis and

in particular to enable comparisons to be made among staff groups. Answers to open-ended questions were recorded separately and analysed by content.

The interview data was analysed in a similar way; a master sheet was used to record all the answers, and individual comments were recorded separately.

The analyses recorded in the report are based on the total number of respondents and the number of respondents in each staff group. An analysis of the questionnaires according to whether persons were employed in residential establishments or non-residential establishments was also undertaken; where differences were apparent they are recorded in the report.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Use of the Digest (questionnaire q. 2)

Respondents were asked how they used the Digest (Table 3). Forty-one per cent claimed they read it thoroughly, 54 per cent glanced at it, and 2 per cent did not use it. Three per cent of the respondents did not answer this question. A higher proportion of respondents in the administrative groups (83 per cent) than of respondents in other groups claimed they read the Digest thoroughly; however, there were only 6 respondents in this group so that this finding may not be representative. Both the directors who responded also claimed to read the Digest thoroughly. Overall there was a tendency for a higher proportion of directors, senior, professionally trained and administrative staff than of other staff to read the Digest thoroughly, and a higher proportion of clerical and manual staff, home-helps and care assistants than of other staff glanced at the Digest.

3.1.1 The news section (questionnaire q. 3)

Ninety-four per cent of respondents read the news section (Table 4). Fewer home-helps read this section than other respondents, but since a larger

proportion of home-helps than of other staff groups gave no answer, over all there were more non-readers among manual staff than among other groups.

Seventy-nine per cent of all respondents found the news section useful and 18 per cent found it of no use; 5 per cent did not reply. Of those who did find the news section useful, 8 per cent found it useful for their work alone, 49 per cent for general interest in the Social Services Department's activities, and 42 per cent for both their work and general interest.

There was little difference in assessed usefulness of the news section between different staff groups, although directors, senior, professionally trained and administrative staff did not find the news section alone useful for their work.

3.1.2 The library information bulletin (questionnaire q. 4)

Respondents were asked if they read the library information bulletin: 51 per cent of all respondents claimed to read it, 44 per cent said they did not, and 5 per cent did not reply (Table 6). Manual and clerical staff were less likely to read this section than other staff.

TABLE 3

USE OF THE DIGEST

(percentages)

Staff groups	Read it thoroughly	Glance at	Not use	No response	N
Directors	100	0	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	54	46	0	0	(24)
Professionally trained	38	55	2	4	(47)
Administrative	83	17	0	0	(6)
Clerical	42	54	4	0	(24)
Manual	32	64	4	0	(56)
Home-helps	42	50	3	4	(141)
Care assistants	37	61	0	2	(44)
ALL GROUPS	41	54	2	3	(344)

TABLE 4

READING OF NEWS SECTION

(percentages)

Staff groups	Yes	No	No response	(N)
Directors	100	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	96	4	0	(24)
Professionally trained	91	4	4	(47)
Administrative	83	0	17	(6)
Clerical	96	4	0	(24)
Manual	91	9	0	(56)
Home-helps	81	6	12	(141)
Care assistants	98	0	2	(44)
ALL GROUPS	94	5	4	(344)

TABLE 5

USEFULNESS OF THE NEWS SECTION

(percentages

Staff groups	Work only	Interest in department's activities	Both	No response	(N)
Directors	0	50	50	0	(2)
Senior staff	0	35	60	5	(20)
Professionally trained	0	73	24	3	(37)
Administrative	0	50	50	0	(4)
Clerical	10	60	25	5	(20)
Manual	3	61	37	0	(38)
Home-helps	14	34	53	0	(109)
Care assistants	12	58	30	0	(33)
ALL GROUPS	8	49	42	1	(263)

TABLE 6

READING OF LIBRARY INFORMATION BULLETIN

(percentages)

Staff groups	Yes	No	No response	(N)
Directors	100	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	67	33	0	(24)
Professionally trained	66	32	2	(47)
Administrative	67	17	17	(6)
Clerical	42	58	0	(24)
Manual	32	56	2	(56)
Home-helps	48	43	9	(141)
Care assistants	61	36	2	(44)
ALL GROUPS	51	44	5	(344)

There was a difference between residential and non-residential staff: only 49 per cent of the former read the library information bulletin, compared with 72 per cent of non-residential staff.

Respondents were asked if they found the library information bulletin useful (Table 7); 39 per cent did, 45 per cent did not and 16 per cent did not respond. Of those who did find the library information bulletin useful, 14 per cent found it useful for their work alone, 38 per cent for general interest in the department's activities and 45 per cent for both. (4 per cent did not reply.) Directors, senior staff and professionally trained staff were more likely to find the bulletin useful for their work alone than the other staff groups, and less likely to find it useful for general interest in the department's activities. The pattern in these responses shows a clear division between upper and lower level staff. There was a tendency for non-residential staff to find the library information bulletin more useful for their work alone than residential staff. Respondents from each staff group used the bulletin to almost the same extent for both their work and their interest in the department's activities.

Respondents were asked if they tried to locate the articles or books in the library information bulletin (Table 8). Almost half of the respondents said that they never tried to locate the original articles, 23 per cent of all respondents sometimes tried to do so and 1 per cent stated that they always did. More clerical and manual staff, home-helps and care assistants 'sometimes' or 'never' tried to locate articles or books than other staff. More non-residential staff (40 per cent) tried to locate original articles than residential staff (24 per cent).

When respondents were asked whether they found the abstracts sufficiently informative, 16 per cent said 'yes', 24 per cent said 'sometimes', 20 per cent said 'no'; 36 per cent did not reply (Table 9). Some of the staff groups did diverge from this overall pattern. All persons in the director group and half of those in the administrative group were satisfied with the abstracts. These proportions are much higher than those for all staff, but as few persons were sampled in these groups, the findings can only be tentative. More persons in the senior and professionally trained groups were 'sometimes' satisfied with the abstracts, than persons in other groups. On the whole it would seem that almost as many were satisfied as dissatisfied with the abstracts. The large number of non-respondents to this question is striking: this is probably due to a genuine inability to answer the question rather than simple omission.

TABLE 7

USEFULNESS OF THE LIBRARY INFORMATION BULLETIN

(percentages)

Staff groups	Work only	Interest in department's activities	Both	No response	(N)
Directors	50	0	50	0	(2)
Senior staff	31	15	46	8	(13)
Professionally trained	26	26	41	7	(27)
Administrative	0	50	50	0	(3)
Clerical	0	33	50	16	(6)
Manual	11	50	39	0	(18)
Home-helps	11	43	47	0	(47)
Care assistants	0	53	42	5	(19)
ALL GROUPS	14	38	44	4	(135)

TABLE 8

FOLLOW UP OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES LISTED IN LIBRARY INFORMATION BULLETIN

(percentages)

Staff groups	Always	Sometimes	Never	No response	(N)
Directors	0	100	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	0	49	29	23	(24)
Professionally trained	0	38	38	23	(47)
Administrative	0	50	33	17	(6)
Clerical	0	21	58	21	(24)
Manual	0	18	52	30	(56)
Home-helps	1	18	49	32	(141)
Care assistants	0	19	61	21	(44)
ALL GROUPS	1	23	48	27	(344)

TABLE 9

WHETHER ABSTRACTS WERE FOUND SUFFICIENTLY INFORMATIVE

(percentages)

Staff groups	Yes	Sometimes	No	No response	(N)
Directors	100	0	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	13	46	8	33	(24)
Professionally trained	11	51	10	28	(47)
Administrative	50	0	33	17	(6)
Clerical	17	29	17	38	(24)
Manual	11	29	29	32	(56)
Home-helps	18	18	23	41	(141)
Care assistants	16	36	14	34	(44)
ALL GROUPS	16	29	20	36	(344)

3.1.3 Identification of items included in the Digest (interview qq. 7 & 8)

The interviews gave the opportunity to assess the use of the Digest in a more valid way than in the questionnaire, where only direct questions could be used. Interviewees were presented with two news items and two abstracts (see Appendix B) taken from a recent issue of the Digest, and were asked first if they recalled having seen them, and then if so, where.

The results of this indirect approach tended to confirm the data from the questionnaire (Table 10). Only a few persons said they did not look at the Digest, and most of them usually scanned it. The interviewees who did not read the Digest said they found the contents of no value. When confronted with the news items and the abstracts, far more (31 per cent) could recall seeing news item X_1 in the Digest than news item X_2 (11 per cent) or the two abstracts (15 per cent and 12 per cent respectively). Rather more had seen the news items in the local press and several could not remember where they had seen them; only a quarter had not seen news item X_1, while over half had not seen news item X_2. The variation between the two news items is very large; in retrospect it is apparent that several more news items should have been used. The difference may be explained by the nature of the news reported in each item: X_1 was concerned with a dispute over the whole development plan for Wiltshire social services, while X_2 related only to Swindon. With selective scanning, the first item is much more likely to have attracted attention and to be retained in the memory than the second item.

By contrast with the news items, nearly three-quarters of those interviewed had not seen the abstracts, though some had seen them without remembering where; there was relatively little difference in recall between the two abstracts. Home-helps and care assistants were more likely to identify the news items in the Digest than were other staff, and senior staff were least likely to identify the news items in the Digest, perhaps because they read much more literature altogether and were less likely to remember a specific reference. Interviewees from the administrative, clerical, manual, home-help and care assistant groups were less likely than other staff to be able to identify the abstracts.

TABLE 10

IDENTIFICATION BY INTERVIEWEES OF NEWS ITEMS AND ABSTRACTS

(percentages)

	News items		Abstracts		
	X_1	X_2	Y_1	Y_2	
In Digest	31	11	15	12	
In local press	34	24	0	0	
Elsewhere*	0	5	0	0	
Cannot specify where	11	4	13	15	
Cannot identify	24	55	72	73	

Table count 74

* Includes memos and handouts from the department as well as official handouts from Swindon Viewpoint.

3.2 Satisfaction with type of material published in the Digest

(questionnaire q. 5; interview q. 8e)

Over two thirds of respondents to the questionnaire (68 per cent) said they were satisfied with the type of material published in the Digest; 19 per cent of respondents said they were not satisfied, and 13 per cent did not reply (Table 11). There were few significant differences between staff groups in satisfaction with material. There was a tendency for residential staff to be more satisfied with the type of material published in the Digest than non-residential staff; 66 per cent of residential staff said they were satisfied and 26 per cent said they were not satisfied (for non-residential staff these figures are 51 per cent and 38 per cent respectively).

Respondents were asked to give reasons for their dissatisfaction with the material in the Digest. Comments on the Digest as a whole included:

(a) "The Digest seems to be degenerating into a poor quality house magazine. The Digest should be used to promote a professional attitude to social work and should not just be used as a vehicle for social chat."

(b) There was a general feeling among the staff of the residential establishments that the Digest did not really cater for their needs. They required information on activities and plans of residential establishments. At present the Digest only gives ad hoc news about holidays for the elderly, children's excursions, etc.

(c) Home-helps also felt that the Digest did not contain much information that was of direct relevance to their work. They thought that as they worked on their own it was necessary for the Digest to contain a section of news and information relevant to their work.

Comments on the news section included:

(a) "The news is not sufficiently current enough and most is already known before reading it in the Digest."

(b) "The news items do not give enough information."

(c) More news is needed on area activities and residential establishments in Wiltshire, plus more information on national affairs.

(d) More detail is required on policy decisions made at County Hall - not only the actual decisions but also the events leading up to them.

(e) "A full diary of all conferences, meetings, etc., in the department."

(f) There was a very strong feeling that the Digest ought to be a vehicle for the staff to express their personal opinions and views. At the moment there was not enough staff participation; many thought the Digest ought to be used for exchanges of ideas and developments in social welfare, and in fact as a general forum for discussion.

(g) A large proportion of interviewees commented that they always read the "comings and goings", and many suggested this section ought to be extended to include personal notes about each individual.

(h) "It is not necessary for minutes of meetings to be published in the Digest, as they are already available to whoever wants them."

Comments on the library information bulletin included:

(a) "It is too long and contains much irrelevant material. It is difficult to find the articles that are of relevance because subject headings are lacking."

(b) "Many of the abstracts are taken from material published in America, which, although it is interesting, is not really relevant to the situations in this country."

(c) There is a lack of material relevant to professional administration.

(d) The library information bulletin acts as a stimulus for ideas.

(e) "It ought to be published separately from the Digest."

(f) "In order to make retrospective use of the library bulletin an index is necessary."

(g) "I find the section too frightening to read because it makes me aware that I do not keep up-to-date with the literature."

(h) "It is of general interest only; it is always the last thing I look at in the Digest."

(i) "Each issue should concentrate on particular subjects."

TABLE 11

SATISFACTION WITH TYPE OF MATERIAL PUBLISHED IN THE DIGEST

(percentages)

Staff groups	Yes	No	No response	(N)
Directors	0	100	0	(2)
Senior staff	67	29	5	(24)
Professionally trained	53	32	16	(47)
Administrative	33	50	17	(6)
Clerical	63	33	4	(24)
Manual	64	27	10	(56)
Home-helps	77	4	19	(141)
Care assistants	75	21	5	(44)
ALL GROUPS	68	19	13	(344)

3.3 Frequency of issue of the Digest (questionnaire q. 6; interview q. 8e)

Respondents were asked whether they found the present monthly Digest too frequent, about the right frequency, or not frequent enough. Table 12 shows that the great majority (78 per cent) were satisfied with the present monthly frequency, and only a very few (2 per cent) found it not frequent enough. Several interviewees, however, did comment that they would prefer a quarterly digest; a monthly digest did not allow enough time for comments and replies to be made to articles published.

3.4 Presentation and format of the Digest (questionnaire q. 7; interview q. 9)

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the presentation and format of the Digest, and if not, to give reasons. The results are shown in Table 13.

Again, the great majority (79 per cent) were satisfied with the existing presentation and format of the Digest. Only 14 per cent said they were not satisfied, (8 per cent did not reply). There was a tendency for manual staff, home-helps and care assistants to be more satisfied than other staff. A frequent comment by those respondents who returned the questionnaire and also by those who were interviewed, was that the print was too small, and this did not encourage people to read the Digest. Over a third of interviewees thought the Digest ought to be presented in a form like that of a newspaper, with headlines and also photographs. Other comments included criticism of the layout and design; questionnaire respondents and interviewees thought there was nothing eye-catching in the present layout, and some commented that it was too much like an official departmental document.

TABLE 12

SATISFACTION WITH FREQUENCY OF DIGEST

(percentages)

Staff groups	Too frequent	About the right frequency	Not frequent enough	No response	(N)
Directors	0	100	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	13	75	4	8	(24)
Professionally trained	9	81	2	9	(47)
Administrative	17	50	0	33	(6)
Clerical	0	96	0	4	(24)
Manual	14	73	7	5	(56)
Home-helps	6	76	0	18	(141)
Care assistants	9	86	0	5	(44)
ALL GROUPS	8	78	2	12	(344)

TABLE 13

SATISFACTION WITH PRESENTATION AND FORMAT OF DIGEST

(percentages)

Staff groups	Satisfied	Not satisfied	No response	(N)
Directors	0	100	0	(2)
Senior staff	71	25	4	(24)
Professionally trained	68	26	6	(47)
Administrative	33	33	33	(6)
Clerical	67	25	8	(24)
Manual	82	16	2	(56)
Home-helps	85	3	13	(141)
Care assistants	84	16	0	(44)
ALL GROUPS	79	14	8	(344)

3.5 What is done with the Digest after it has been read (questionnaire q. 8)

Respondents were asked what they did with the Digest after they had read it; they were asked to indicate whether they threw it away, filed it, or kept it for a week or so and then threw it away or lost it. The results are shown in Table 14. The majority of respondents (56 per cent) claimed they kept the Digest for a week or so and then either lost it or threw it away; 20 per cent said they filed it and 17 per cent said they threw it away immediately after reading it. More respondents from the directors, senior, professionally trained and clerical staff filed the Digest than those in other groups; it was not apparent from interviews whether respondents who filed the Digest made any retrospective use of it. There was a tendency for more respondents from the administrative and manual staff groups to throw the Digest away after reading it, than other staff. Over all, it appears that the Digest is discarded after a week or so; little retrospective use is made of it.

TABLE 14

WHAT IS DONE WITH DIGEST AFTER READING

(percentages)

Staff groups	Throw it away at once	File it	Keep and then lose or throw it away	No response	(N)
Directors	50	50	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	4	25	67	4	(24)
Professionally trained	19	38	40	2	(47)
Administrative	33	0	50	17	(6)
Clerical	17	33	46	4	(24)
Manual	29	11	57	4	(56)
Home-helps	16	16	58	10	(141)
Care assistants	14	14	68	5	(44)
ALL GROUPS	17	20	56	7	(344)

TABLE 15

NEED FOR AN INFORMATION DIGEST

(percentages)

Staff groups	Yes	No	No response	(N)
Directors	100	0	0	(2)
Senior staff	92	4	4	(24)
Professionally trained	89	6	4	(47)
Administrative	83	0	17	(6)
Clerical	96	4	0	(24)
Manual	91	2	7	(56)
Home-helps	76	11	14	(141)
Care assistants	96	2	2	(44)
ALL GROUPS	85	7	8	(344)

3.6 Need for an information digest (questionnaire q. 9)

Respondents were asked if they thought the department needed an information digest of some kind (Table 15). The term 'information digest' was not explained in the questionnaire, but it was assumed that respondents would interpret it as being a document giving information on what was happening in Wiltshire Social Services Department and also outside it. 85 per cent of respondents thought there was a need for an information digest, 7 per cent said 'no', (8 per cent did not respond). There was little difference between staff groups in replies to this question.

4.0 ADDITIONAL DATA FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The interviewees were first asked to state the exact nature of their work and to describe briefly a typical day. The answers to this question were not analysed in detail and are not reported. The purpose of the question was to firstly let the interviewee collect his thoughts about his work so that he would more easily be able to answer questions on the type of information he used, and secondly to enable the interviewer to phrase his questions in a way that was seen to relate directly to the interviewee's work. In short, its purpose was orientation.

4.1 Type of information used in work (interview q. 9)

The types of information used by social service department employees may be categorised in several ways. One convenient way is as follows:

(a) Day to day information relating to the local community (and the individual in it)

(b) Factual information, e.g. on legal and medical matters, statistical data

(c) Information on relevant practical developments within the area or outside it

(d) Information arising from relevant research.

The majority (99 per cent) of interviewees used factual information of one kind or another, and for all of the staff groups it was the most frequently used type of information. Directors, senior and professionally trained staff tended to use a good deal of statistical information, legal and medical facts and general factual data. Home-helps, care assistants, manual and clerical staff used factual information concerned with their specific day to day jobs; this was often the main type of information used by these groups. Clerical and administrative staff also used factual information relevant to the everyday running of the department.

Forty-seven per cent of interviewees used day to day information about the local community and about individual clients. There was a tendency for directors, clerical and manual staff to make less use of this type of information than other interviewees. Social workers made the greatest use of this type of information, naturally enough, as an important part of their work is to find out the personal and social background of each client. Care assistants in residential homes mentioned that although it was not an essential part of their work to know about the people in the home, it was helpful to know something of their histories.

Forty-three per cent of the interviewees claimed to use information on practical developments and new schemes that were taking place within social

welfare. Directors, senior and professionally trained staff tended to make more use of this type of information than other groups. Manual staff were the only group that made no use of this type of information.

Only 10 persons (7 per cent) said they made any use of research findings in their work, and these were all directors, senior and professionally trained staff. A good many more mentioned that they would like to keep up-to-date with research findings; they did not because they either had not got sufficient time, or, in the case of a few, because they did not know how to find out the relevant research findings.

Interviewees were also asked if they could rank the types of information which they used in order of importance. Most of them were unable to do this, and no conclusions can be drawn from this part of the interviews.

4.2 Methods of finding information (interview q. 2)

One method which everyone used was conversation with colleagues. For home-helps, care assistants and manual staff this was the only method used in finding information. It was used particularly for finding information on practical developments and new schemes. Persons working in residential establishments often commented that they felt rather isolated from the rest of the social services department. The only way they found out what was happening in the department as a whole and also in other residential establishments was by conversation with persons working in the homes. A good deal of factual information was also obtained in conversation with colleagues; for instance, social workers relied very heavily on informal contacts for obtaining information, in particular the finding of suitable placements for clients, and also court procedures.

Over 50 per cent of interviewees obtained information from a central filing system within the particular office in which they worked. Home-helps, care assistants and manual workers made no use of filing systems for obtaining information. There were numerous comments on the inadequacies of the filing systems, and a few mentioned the total lack of any type of system. Others suggested the need for a person to be responsible for the filing system to

ensure that all material was replaced correctly. One person mentioned that he had no time for organising a filing system and had to be content with piles of papers lying in and on his desk. Only a few persons kept their own personal filing system.

Thirty-nine per cent of interviewees said they found information in the course of routine reading; directors, senior and professionally trained staff tended to use this method far more than other staff. Interviewees frequently mentioned that they found information on practical developments in social welfare in this way.

Thirty per cent of interviewees used the public library to find information, and only 23 per cent said they used the department library. The use of libraries (of whatever kind) was mainly confined to directors, senior and professionally trained staff.

Twenty-four per cent of interviewees claimed to have used reference and bibliographical tools; these included directories, encyclopaedias, abstracts, indexes and general reference books. Only a few persons used abstracts and indexing tools, the majority using directories or reference books, e.g. directories of charities. A few persons stated that they made great use of telephone directories and the yellow pages. Several officers- and assistant officers-in-charge of residential homes mentioned that they used the Monthly Index of Medical Specialities (MIMS).

A fairly small proportion of interviewees (17 per cent) said they asked other people to find the information for them; these, not surprisingly, were mainly directors, senior and professionally trained groups. The remainder presumably had no-one to whom this function could be delegated.

Interviewees were also asked if they could rank the methods they used to find information in order of importance. As with the question on ranking in the previous section, very few interviewees could do this: for those who could, conversation with colleagues was mentioned as being most important.

4.3 Literature read regularly (interview qq. 3 & 6)

Fifty-eight per cent of interviewees said they regularly read literature on social welfare. Home-helps, care assistants and manual staff did not claim to read any relevant literature. All the directors interviewed regularly read literature, and over three-quarters of the senior and professionally trained staff read literature on a fairly regular basis. Social workers in particular said that although they felt it was important to keep up-to-date with the literature they rarely had time to do so. Fifty per cent of the administrative and clerical staff claimed to read some literature. Not all of the interviewees who said they regularly read literature relevant to social welfare, could name books or journals that they had read in the last month, but of those who could, most named two journals. The journals named are given in Appendix C. All directors could name some of the journals they scanned, and 73 per cent of senior staff were able to name journals. Only 41 per cent of professionally trained staff named journals, and only 2 (20 per cent) of the administrative and clerical staff did so.

Of the interviewees who regularly scanned social welfare literature, only 16 (37 per cent) could name a recent article they had read; these were from the senior, professionally trained, administrative and clerical staff. When the interviewees were asked where they had read the article, no one claimed to have read or seen it in the Digest.

4.4 Use of the Social Services Department Library (interview q. 5)

Only 20 per cent of interviewees had used the library over the last six months: they were almost all in director, senior or professionally trained staff groups. No one used the library on a regular basis; rather, persons used the library when a particular need arose. The majority of persons sought to obtain a named document and the rest sought information on a specific subject. The most frequent method of obtaining information from the library was by telephone; several made personal visits, and one sent a memo. Several said they did not know the library existed (these were professionally trained staff, manual staff, home-helps or cafe assistants), and many did not know they could telephone for information to be sent to them. There was a general feeling in the area offices that people would make more use of the library if it were close at hand. Several mentioned the importance of being able to browse;

although a few books were circulated to the area offices, this did not bring the library any closer. There was a tendency for persons not at Trowbridge to use the public library rather than the departmental library. Of those who did use the departmental library a few said they would like to see a wider coverage of books in it.

4.5 Time spent looking for information (interview q. 4)

Interviewees were asked how much time, if any, they spent actually looking for information each week. The majority (16 per cent) said they spent up to one hour a week, 11 per cent between 1 and 2 hours, and 5 per cent about 5 minutes. Directors, senior and professionally trained staff tended to spend more time searching for information than persons in the other staff groups. Directors and senior staff would have spent considerably more time searching for information, but they usually asked an assistant to find information for them.

Almost a third of interviewees stated that their work was sometimes held up because they were waiting for information. This figure would have been much higher were it not for the fact that many people could always work on something else while waiting for a particular piece of information. Very few said that their work was inconvenienced extensively while they were waiting for information; this was largely because interviewees tended to use what information was available at the time, rather than wait for all the relevant information to be found. Several people commented that because of this they felt that their work was inadequate, and there seemed to be little incentive to press for a more efficient information retrieval service.

4.6 General information problems (interview q. 10)

During the interviews people were encouraged to mention any particular problems they came up against that were concerned with information. These problems are best considered according to the different staff groups.

The directors expressed a general need for information to be readily available on demand. There was a general dissatisfaction with the present information system; information (facts, statistics) on the state of work being carried out by the department was not readily available, and when information could be found it was often not up-to-date. One Director stated that the main problem was finding out what work his own department was doing, and what stage it had reached. Another stated that "In Wiltshire I lack many things, but information is what I lack most."

Several suggestions were put forward for the creation of a resource file. This would consist of statements and material on the existing state of the department's activities. An index of what information was available in the department would accompany the file. Other suggestions included the necessity for a "Who's who" in the county and the need for an information officer in each area, who would be responsible for obtaining and disseminating all information from and to the areas. Added to the problems of finding information were problems in disseminating it and finding out who wants what.

The most frequent problem mentioned by senior staff was the large volume of information each person received; often it was in the form of circulars and memos, and many persons working in area offices and in the residential establishments said that too much information was sent from headquarters. Many people expressed the need for a better filing system, and a lesser number of persons mentioned their lack of expertise in handling their own personal filing systems, e.g. on the best way to keep records of journal articles. Suggestions were again put forward for a resource file and index; one person expressed particular need for a referral centre for all statistics on the department's projects and activities. Several mentioned the need for an information officer who would obtain any information for them. Some of the interviewees in charge of residential establishments expressed the wish for more direct contact with County Hall. They claimed the only contact they had at present was by memos and circulars sent from County Hall, and the very occasional meetings. It was felt that more personal meetings would do much to enhance the flow of information between themselves and County Hall.

Comments from professionally trained staff expressed similar problems to the previous staff groups, namely too much information and too little time

to read it; memos from County Hall were frequently mentioned as being onerous. Social workers in particular thought they were spending too much time finding information which ought to be readily available. For example, there was no comprehensive list of residential homes within Wiltshire and outside it; only partial lists were available. They also expressed concern that there was not up-to-date information on vacancies in residential homes, so that they had to spend time telephoning individual homes. Often information on placements is needed very urgently and there is no system at present for obtaining it when it is needed. Concern was also expressed for the lack of statistical data and research findings presented in usable form. When statistics did exist they were usually not broken down into meaningful groups. For example, statistics on persons in different types of residential homes in the county were not available.

Administrative and clerical staff mentioned fewer problems. However, the one mentioned most frequently was the inadequacies of the present filing systems. Home-helps, care assistants and manual staff also had fewer problems than persons in other staff groups. The most frequent problem mentioned by home-helps and persons working in residential establishments was a general feeling of isolation from County Hall. They felt that more direct contact in the form of meetings and discussions to exchange ideas would help to alleviate this problem.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the survey indicated that certain changes are desirable both in the Digest and in the present information systems within the department. The Digest is an integral part of the department's information system, and any changes made in one part of the system must have implications for other parts. The conclusions and recommendations relate to four main parts of the information system.

5.1 Digest

The survey showed that the existing Digest was read by almost everyone in the department. The majority of respondents glanced at it and a large

proportion (41 per cent) read it thoroughly. It was the staff at a higher level who tended to read the Digest thoroughly. Nearly all respondents read the news section (94 per cent) and 79 per cent found it useful. The library information bulletin was read by only half of the respondents and only just over a third of respondents found it useful; these were mainly high level staff.

The majority of respondents were satisfied with the present monthly frequency and also with the presentation. The most frequent criticism of presentation was that the print was too small. Although the majority of questionnaire respondents were satisfied with the type of material published in the Digest, there was a general feeling amongst the interviewees that articles and letters giving personal views and comments ought to be published in the Digest. The Digest was discarded by the majority of respondents once they had read it; very few persons kept each issue.

Although there was an overriding need for an information digest of one kind or another in the department, the present Digest does not fully satisfy the needs of all the staff. The present Digest tries to meet the needs of the whole department, but as the survey has shown, different staff groups have different information requirements. The results of the survey suggest:

(a) The news section should be more comprehensive, to include details of the department's activities, a full diary of events for the month and a section on staff news.

(b) Contributions from the staff should be included in the form of letters and articles putting forward personal views on new ideas, trends or developments relevant to social welfare.

(c) Persons working in each area need detailed information on current developments in their area. In addition to the general news section, another section dealing with area developments and news could be inserted. Persons in each area would receive the main digest plus that section relating to their own area developments. Alternatively, each issue of the digest could concentrate on the current developments in one area and this would be sent to all persons; this form of digest

would have the advantage that everyone in the department would have a chance to see details of developments in all areas. In order to find the most satisfactory form, experiment over a short period would probably be necessary.

(d) The library information bulletin perhaps ought to be published separately from the main digest, and tailored according to the requirements of each staff group. For example, social workers, administrative staff, and residential staff require different material; at present, if the library bulletin does contain material of relevance to these groups, the staff may easily miss seeing it because of the bulk of material which may be irrelevant. The survey showed that the bulletin was not read by the majority of clerical and manual staff, home-helps and care assistants. These staff groups do not require abstracts, but rather information of direct relevance to their jobs. For instance, home-helps felt that as they worked on their own, they had very little contact with other home-helps; a news sheet giving details of work carried out by other home-helps would be far more useful than formal abstracts. Care assistants and manual workers in residential homes were particularly interested to hear of news from other residential homes; news sheets giving this type of information could be produced.

Any publication of this kind must represent a compromise between what is ideally desirable and what is economically and practically possible. The Digest emerges from this study as a tool that is fairly well used and that serves many of the purposes for which it is intended. With a few quite small improvements it could both convey information more effectively and serve as a better communication link between County Hall and the staff, and between the staff themselves.

Whether the abstracts earn their keep is open to question: the study casts doubt on it, but does not provide conclusive evidence. At best, they must be highly selective, and represent a good deal of work. Perhaps abstracts could be drawn from other published services - the additional delay might not matter - or omitted entirely, though if they were, other means should be found of communicating relevant items to senior staff at least; perhaps by a personal service from an information officer.

5.2 Re-organisation of office filing systems

There was a general dissatisfaction with the present filing systems; interviewees commented that they were either non-existent or very inadequate. Several persons mentioned that the department was relatively new (being originally the Children's Department, the Welfare Department and the Mental Welfare section of the Health Department) and that the office filing systems had not yet been fully organised or implemented.

(a) Centralisation v. decentralisation. A certain amount of duplication of files is desirable between area offices and residential establishments. Residential establishments often tend to lack sufficient data on individual clients, while area offices tend to lack detailed up-to-date information on developments in the county as a whole.

(b) In order for persons in the department to know what information is available and where it can be obtained, an index needs to be compiled. The index should be constantly updated and distributed to all members of the department. This would allow the number of circulars and memos to be considerably reduced (thus meeting another criticism by staff).

(c) A short training course on the use of personal files might be beneficial. At the moment persons have little skill in the organisation of their personal files.

5.3 Information officers

The study showed that many staff, especially at senior levels, would welcome the delegation of searching for and handling of information to information officers (not usually identified specifically as such by respondents). Such a person would have a major role in the communication process, in effect being responsible for all incoming and outgoing information in the department. He would make sure all area offices were supplied with the necessary information, and would filter relevant information to groups and individuals, operating an SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) service; senior staff would have an individual service, other staff a group service. To give such a service,

he would keep in touch with research findings relevant to social welfare, whether generated within the department itself or from any other source; this would meet the expressed need of many to know about relevant research, something they do not now find possible. The information officer would also keep staff up-to-date with new schemes and practical developments taking place in social welfare. Finally, he would exercise a managerial control over the filing system.

The great advantage of a personal information service is its flexibility. It can be adapted to individuals and situations. Informal communication is known to play a very large part in information transfer: an information officer would use formal and informal systems in informal ways. Clearly such a service would need to be closely linked to the library, if not an integral part of its services.

5.4 Role of the department's library

The library is very much under-used as a source for obtaining information. Its existing facilities and acquisition policies should be more widely publicised. As always, a wider coverage of material is dependent upon the funds available. It is not possible at present to obtain all the titles thought to be desirable for the collection and it is far more economical for persons requiring information on, for example, management and statistics to use the public library collections where resources available are, by comparison, vast. It is important that the users of the library understand this policy, as having failed to obtain a titled from the department's library, they may be reluctant to use the library again. The present collection of the department caters for specialist needs as dictated by demand. Wider coverage can only be justified when demands within the department require it. It would obviously be uneconomic for each area to have its own collection of material, as this would involve much duplication. The present policy of the department is to take one copy of all journals on their subscription, and each journal is always kept at the County Library headquarters at Trowbridge. The library does at present send a collection of material to each area for a period of up to three months. It would seem that this service ought to continue whilst, at the same time, lists of new books which are available in the social services collection might be circulated in order to make the staff aware of what the library has to offer.

5.5 General

Some of these proposals would cost little or nothing to implement, but others would require additional resources. It would go far beyond the function of this report to draw up detailed plans with costings; all that can be said is that needs exist which are at present unsatisfied, and the cost of satisfying them, wholly or partially, would have to be weighed against the benefits. This must clearly be a policy and administrative decision.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire and interview schedules

WILTSHIRE SOCIAL SERVICES STAFF DIGEST

QUESTIONNAIRE

Now that the Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest has been produced for several months we would very much like to hear your views on it. The Digest is being evaluated with the cooperation of a research team at Bath University.

Please mark one box only for each question unless otherwise stated.

1. Please describe briefly the type of work you do.

2. How do you use the Digest? Do you: read it thoroughly? ☐
glance at it? ☐
not use it? ☐

The Digest is divided into two distinct sections; a section on Wiltshire Social Services Department news, and a library information bulletin. We would like you to answer questions on both sections.

3. THE NEWS SECTION

(a) Do you read the news section?
Yes ☐
No ☐

(b) Do you find this section useful?
Yes ☐
No ☐

(c) If 'yes' do you find it useful for: (mark one or more boxes)
your work? ☐
your interest in Social Service Department activities? ☐
both? ☐

4. LIBRARY INFORMATION BULLETIN

(a) Do you read the library information bulletin?
Yes ☐
No ☐

4. (b) Do you find this section useful?

Yes ☐
No ☐

(c) If 'yes' do you find it useful for:

your work? ☐
your interest in Social Service Department activities? ☐
both? ☐

(d) Do you ever locate the original articles, books, etc?

always ☐
sometimes ☐
never ☐

(e) Do you find the abstracts sufficiently informative?

Yes ☐
Sometimes ☐
No ☐

5. Are you satisfied with the type of material published in the Digest?

Yes ☐
No ☐

If 'no' please give reasons:

6. Do you think a monthly Digest is

too frequent? ☐
about the right frequency? ☐
not frequently enough? ☐

7. Are you satisfied with the presentation and format of the Digest?

Yes ☐
No ☐

If 'no' please give reasons.

8. When you have looked at the Digest what do you do when you have finished with it? Do you:

throw it away? ☐
file it? ☐
keep for a week or so and then throw away or lose it? ☐

9. Do you think the Social Services Department needs an information digest of some kind?

Yes ☐
No ☐

10. Please make any other comments you wish about the Wiltshire Social Service Staff Digest.

Bath University

Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MEMBERS OF WILTSHIRE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

We are interested in how persons working in social welfare can be better served with information. I would like to discuss with you the information you use in your everyday work, and the methods you use to find information.

1. (a) What is the exact nature of your job? Could you briefly describe a typical day?

(b) What type of information do you use in your work?

Prompt:
- Day to day information, about the local community, individual clients which may take the form of case histories
- Factual information, e.g. names, addresses, laws, medical facts
- Information on practical developments, e.g. trends in geriatric hospitals, schemes for new types of youth work, etc.
- Research findings

(c) Can you rank these roughly in order of use or importance?

2. (a) How do you go about finding information?

Prompt:
- bibliographical tools, e.g. reference books, encyclopaedias, directories, abstracts, indexes, D.H.S.S. Bulletin
- Wiltshire Social Service Department Library
- the Public Library
- in conversation with colleagues
- in the course of routine reading
- own personal information/filing system
- a central information/filing system
- ask an assistant to find the information for you
- other

(b) Can you rank these roughly in order of use or importance?

3. (a) Do you regularly read any literature relevant to social welfare?

(b) Can you name any journals, books, magazines, etc., that you have read/scanned in the last month?

4. (a) Can you estimate approximately how much time, if any, you spend looking for information each week?

Prompt:
- 5 minutes
- up to 1 hour
- 1 to 2 hours

4. (b) Are you often held up on a particular piece of work because you are waiting, or searching, for information?

(c) If you are held up, is your work inconvenienced?

Prompt: - extensively
- partially
- hardly at all

5. (a) Do you regularly use the Social Service Department Library?

(b) Can you tell me when was the last time you used the library?

(c) What type of information did you wish to obtain from the library?

Prompt: - a named document
- specific information on a subject
- name and address
- other

(d) How did you obtain the information from the library?

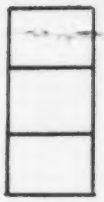
Prompt: - ask librarian by personal visit
- browse
- telephone the librarian
- other

5. (e) Would you like to see any improvements in the library service?

Prompt:
- better or different coverage
- more personal help in finding material
- a larger area available for browsing
- current awareness bulletins
- other

6. (a) Can you recall reading a recent item of information on social welfare? If so, what was it?

(b) Where and when did you see this item?



present in Digest and was seen in the Digest

present in Digest but was not seen in the Digest

not present in Digest

7. (The interviewer will show the interviewee two items, a 'news' item (X) and a 'research type' item (Y), which are in a recent issue of the Digest)

7. (a) Can you recall seeing, or hearing about, X? If so, where did you see or hear about it?

(b) Can you recall seeing, or hearing about, Y? If so, where did you see or hear about it?

8. (a) Do you see the Wiltshire Social Service Staff Digest?
(If obvious from questions 6 or 7, interviewees will be asked if they see it <u>regularly</u>.)

(b) How do you use the Digest? Do you:

read it thoroughly?

scan it?

glance at it?

(c) If you read the Digest, which parts do you find most useful?

<u>Prompt</u>: - the news section
- library bulletin

(d) If you do not read it, can you please tell me why?

<u>Prompt</u>: - do not have the time
- do not find the contents of any value
- do not receive a copy
- other

8. (e) Can you suggest any improvements for the Digest?

Prompt: - contents
- frequency
- presentation

9. Would you prefer the Social Service Department to produce any other form of information service as an alternative to the Staff Digest?

Prompt: - a newspaper style service with journalistic reports rather than formal abstracts
- a service which restricts each issue to reviewing developments on particular subjects
- other

10. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make on information needs for your work and ways in which they could be better met?

ABSTRACT Y_1

Working with young people: some theoretical perspectives underlying intermediate treatment

David Thorpe

This is an attempt to discuss selectively some of the literature relevant to intermediate treatment. Literature discussed includes the white paper preceding the 1969 Children and Young Persons Act, the Act itself, Probationers in their Social Environment and Girls at Vocational High. It seems quite clear from the analysis that the majority of delinquent acts take place in group settings and frequently delinquency is the norm for adolescents who have failed both at home and at school. Intermediate treatment groups should supply treatment in a creative and imaginative peer group enterprise where socially accepted norms predominate. Knowledge and skills for such groups are more easily found among trained social workers than youth leaders or teachers. Therefore intermediate treatment should be regarded primarily as a specialised social work undertaking.

ABSTRACT Y_2

Disabled people's views on their aids

Margaret R. Lyth

A research group at Lancaster University recently did a survey of disabled people in the Lancaster and Morecambe area and among topics studied was the advantages and limitations of the special aids which disabled people use.

Problems that emerged included the difficulty of getting an artificial limb to be repaired and communicating the exact nature of repairs and adaptation necessary. There is a need for design improvements to hearing aids and calipers and the need for consultation about aids and their use and comfort.

Many people were dissatisfied with transport for the disabled. The motorised tricycle is noisy, unstable, cannot carry passengers and offers little protection if a collision occurs. The questionnaire response also demonstrated clearly that being disabled is expensive as just being disabled does not give exemption from prescription charges.

The extra wear and tear on clothing adds to expense as does the running of a Mini car as the petrol allowance provided by the Government is inadequate for those who depend on a car for mobility.

It would be worth running a wider study to see if the third of the survey who were dissatisfied with their aids were a typical number for the country as a whole and if so to find means of remedying the situation.

APPENDIX B

News items and abstracts used in the interview

NEWS ITEM X_1

Attack on Ten-Year Plan

The SOUTHERN EVENING ECHO of 17th March reported a sharp attack made on Wiltshire's £39½ million ten-year plan for expanding and improving the social services, for it was claimed that there was no specific reference in the report to the problem of homelessness. Brigadier Wort is reported to have refuted this claim, saying that the department had been very active indeed in caring for the homeless. Mr Newton stressed that this was a national problem needing a national solution and added that the plan was not a hard and fast one - it would be constantly reviewed in the light of new knowledge.

NEWS ITEM X_2

What is Swindon Viewpoint?

Swindon Viewpoint is one of five community television services licensed by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications to run on an experimental basis until 1976.

Swindon Viewpoint is a limited company, with responsibility for the production of local interest television programmes to be transmitted in black and white over the existing cable network in Swindon. (Of approximately 34,000 houses in Swindon, approximately 24,000 have a cable laid to their door, and of these, 12,000 are currently connected and subscribing - at 15p a week).

Swindon Viewpoint is financed as a research and development project by EMI Ltd., and run in collaboration with Radio Rentals, owners of the cable. No taxpayer money is involved, and the service will not be supported by commercial advertising or sponsorship. Editorial control is vested in the Managing Director who is directly responsible to the Ministry for content of all transmitted programme material.

Swindon Viewpoint is presently preparing for transmissions to commence during the second half of 1973, with approximately five hours of original programming per week. Participation in the conception, development and production of programme material is currently being sought from individuals and organisations in the Swindon community.

APPENDIX C

JOURNALS SCANNED BY EMPLOYEES OF

WILTSHIRE SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

British Journal of Social Work
British Hospital Journal and Social Services Review
British Medical Journal
Child Care
Children in Care
Community Schools Gazette
Industrial Training International
Local Government Chronicle
Municipal Journal
New Society
Nursing Mirror
Occupational Therapy
Residential Care
Social Service Quarterly
Social Service Review
Social Work Today
Social Worker
Wiltshire County Council News